NEW YORK LETTER.

Descriptions of Scenes That Are Unfortunately Not Exaggerated.

The Vagabond Life of a Great City—Where Criminals Are Reared and Taught Lessons of Crime—Filth That Only New York Can Equal—A Sombre Picture.

[Philadelphia Press.]

NEW YORK, May 9.—Strange as it may seem, the chief cities of republics are rarely clean. Without entering at all into a discussion of the desirability of being a free citizen with free speech and freedom of action in a free country, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in a free country where free men are permitted freedom of speech and freedom of action, enforced cleanliness is an apparent impossibility. Nothing short of absolute monarchy, a despotism dependent upon the whim of no one save the supreme autocrat in control, can compel even decent people to live in public cleanliness. Brooklyn is the dirtiest city I ever saw. Its streets in winter are literally covered with slush—part mud, part snow, part salt. Three grat corporations, the Brooklyn City Railroad, the Brooklyn Gas Company and Greenwood Cemetery, all in the hands of one small clique of reputable "first citizens," dominate that city, absolutely rule it from year's end to year's end as they have done for the past forty years. Brooklyn's chief thoroughfares are really marvels of dirt. Ashes, paper, all manner of garbage, dirt in piles, make even its nicer streets uncanny at all times and unpleasant to look at or pass through. In some favored localities neighbors club together and hire a man to sweep the street, but sweeping the street without carrying away the sweeping amounts to but little, after all.

New York is so much more densely populated, its poverty is much more conspicuous, its roost is utilized by so many carrion crows from beyond the seas, and corporate greed squeezes so tightly the throats of poor and humble employes, that it not unnaturally affords a fertile field for alarmists, who talk about the coming cholera and point to several fever breeding nests here as the places where the cholera seed will soonest drop, and wherein it will the most quickly develop.

When you run over from Philadelphia by your Pennsylvania limited for a few hours in the metropolis you hurry up Broadway or along the speed tracks of your Elevated Road to your favorite St. James or Brunswick, lunch in a gayly decorated apartment, take in a matinee or a picture gallery, look at the happy throngs upon Fifth avenue or the main artery of our town and whisk back again, thinking you have "seen New York." Well, perhaps you have seen its comfort, its opulence, its ease, its jollity, but there is a darker and dirtier side you have not seen, about which you know nothing, its slums, its squalid homes, its gaunt and haggard poor, its filthy streets, its reeking alleys, its pestilent hovels, the dirt of disease, the death which exists on the sunless side of this great and glorious metropolis. The worst parts of London and Constantinople and Lisbon are concentrated here. Your senses ache and your gorge rises at the scenes and objects before you. Involuntarily your handkerchief goes to your nostrils and your feet carry you away from the social carrion into which you have stepped. But if, like a young student in the dissecting room, you have come to see and learn, you will stay your flying feet,

CHILDREN AND THEIR HOMES.

The first thing that impresses you is the swarm of children in every street, before every house and shop and at every corner; children of all ages and colors, though the general hue inclines to dirt. The offspring of vice is prolific as the offspring of poverty, and both are there. From the coarse or cadaverous infant in its hard-featured mother's arms to the half-grown girl or boy, unkempt, unwashed, unrestrained, the period of early youth is represented. Even maternity is not sacred or tender there, and there is no soft light in the mother's face as she gives nourishment from the gross, all-exposed bosom to the already infected babe. What should be the innocence of childhood is banished from those purlieus of impurity. Those boys and girls have no childhood, no youth, no freshness, no sweetness, no innocence. They have never eaten a mouthful of wholesome food, inhaled a breath of untainted air, heard the tones of a pure affection. They are accursed from their birth, formed to evil by association, bound to vice by a chain of necessary events they can not break.

Look at their hovels. Twelve feet square is about the average size of very many of their rooms. Walls and ceiling are black with the accretions of filth which have gathered upon them through long years of neglect. It is exuding through cracks in the boards overhead; it is running down the walls; it is everywhere. What goes by the name of window is, half of it, stuffed with rags or covered with boards to keep out the wind and rain; the rest is so begrimed and obscured that scarcely can light enter or anything be seen outside. As to complaining of the dilapidated, filthy condition of the room, these people, chiefly Italians, know better. If they don't like it they can go. There are dozens of others who will jump at the accommodation, and the landlord is well aware of the fact. The streets of certain districts are in a frightful condition.

It is true the principal thoroughfares are kept tolerably clean, but in the alleys and smaller streets filth and dirt are everywhere. Most of the streets are poorly graded, and what is intended to be the gutter is marked by a line of little puddles and pools of stagnant water and refuse. In the afternoon, when the ash barrels, filled with garbage and refuse, are placed on the sidewalk, a stench arises which is sickening. Within a stone's throw of Broadway, Ann street is reeking with poisonous and malodorous gases arising from accumulations of sewage and refuse scattered in all directions.

SOME OF THE HOVELS.

Some of the cheap eating houses in the district have courts which the sun never penetrates, which are never visited by a breath of fresh air and which rarely know the virtues of a drop of cleansing water. Years ago we heard much of the deep cellar lodging houses in the ferry district. That's the district whose streets run down to South street and thence to one of a half a dozen ferries, whose boats ply regularly between Brooklyn and New York. Those infamies are done away with, but Italians still live in what are called basements, sometimes sub-basements, in that same district. In many of these houses both sexes are allowed to herd together, without any attempt to preserve ordinary decency. But there is a lower depth still; hundreds of those who roam about the streets during the day can not even scrape together the ten cents required to secure them the privilege of resting in one of the filthy basement lodging houses, and so they huddle together upon the stairs and landings, where it is no uncommon thing to find four or five in the early morning. The passages and untenanted cellars of the lodging houses, with their doors open night and day, are, during the summer season, nightly filled with these wretched people. Thus not only are many of the cheap lodging houses and homes of the poor in this district breeding houses in themselves for crime, disease and filth, but they are, for lack of proper inspection, receptacles for that which has already been bred elsewhere, and which is deposited gratis to swell the collection.

What sunshine there is in these lodging house stops on the roofs among the chimneys, and is the sole property of the cats of the neighborhood, who may be seen dozing about in dozens. Many of the streets in this neighborhood are stenchful. They are at no time a pleasant promenade, but when a bright sun pours down upon the putrefying garbage; when dirty, sickly looking, bare footed children play steamboat in the thick, slimy waters of the gutters; when the rats in the badly paved streets are filled with scraps and odorous sweepings—well, one bite of a rotten apple, perhaps, is all that is needed.

Bad as these streets are, their filth and smells are nothing compared to the inside of some of our tenement houses. The missionary desiring to enter these rookeries must pass through narrow alleys, deep in dirt and horrible with escaping sewage gas. The rotten staircases are so dark that one has to grope and guide himself by means of the walls, the walls themselves black and grimy with the filth gathered by years of neglect. Room after room is filled with men and women, tailors, shoe makers, hollow chested and consumptive. Dirty, pale, ragged children are stumbeld over at every step. The sick and the well, the idle and the industrious, the vicious and the well-meaning are close together, while lodgers come in at night, making still more dense the population of these hives, in the unventilated rooms of which women cook and wash iron and eat and drink and sleep, the sick lying unattended in pallets on the floor all day, and at night the sick and the well, men and women, boys and girls, pig in together as best they may. In some of the cellars men, women and children, geese, dogs and cats struggle for comfortable lodging. Broken waste pipes allow water and whatever to drip, drip until little streams are formed in which the children play. Roofs leak, plaster cracks, sinks are connected directly with improperly kept out-houses, bogus plumbing ramifies the house, the halls are dirty, the staircases are rickety, the fire escapes are obstructed, the smells are unendurable. In certain sections of the city the gutters are filled with refuse and garbage all the year round. This has obstructed the culverts, rendering the sewers valueless as a means of drainage. During and after a heavy rain the streets are flooded and the water finds a ready outlet into the basements and sub-cellars of the houses.

SOME OF THE LOCALITIES NAMED.

The grim Florentine might have added to the horrors of his vision of hell by a sojourn in one of these houses, for in his "Inferno," the damned, at least, did not breed, but here they do. Every year sees an addition to the long roll of new-born lost. Born into the fetid atmosphere of a crowded basement, suckled on gin and cradled in the gutter, they have no chance. When they are five or six years old they are driven into the public school to infect it with the moral miasma of their lairs. Many are lucky enough to die: others live on, in turn to propagate their kind and to hand down to another generation the curse which never leaves from the cradle to the grave. All this seething mass of misery and vice exists in these slums. It is getting no better; it is getting rather worse. Nearly all the houses between First avenue and Avenue B, from Eleventh street down to Rivington street, have no closets, but cesspools that are not cemented. These scenes which the yards in which these cesspools are located present almost beggar description. In some of these the filth and dirt from these pestholes overflow and flood the yards, breeding typhoid fever and malaria wherever atmospheric influences and the rays of the sun start the latest germs of the disease. One block of houses on Fourth street contains a population of 7,000 persons. Here we found, by a street missionary within a week, seven people living in one basement, and a little dead child lying in the same room. Another apartment contained father, mother and four children, two of whom were ill with measles. In another nine brothers and sisters, from twenty-eight years downward, live, eat and sleep together. In another a mother was found who turns her children into the street in the early evening, because she lets her room for immoral purposes until long after midnight, when the poor little wretches creep back again if they have not found some miserable shelter elsewhere. In many cases matters were found to be made worse by the unhealthy occupations of those who dwell in these habitations. In one apartment the air was laden with particles of superfluous fur pulled from the skins of raboits, rats, dogs and other animals in their preparation for the furrier. And the refuse and rubbish was thrown into the street or into the sub cellar of the house.

IN THE VICINITY OF THE PARK.

One of the worst spots on Manhattan Island is located on the south side of Seventy-second street, just west of Central Park, and occupies the whole space between Eighth and Ninth avenues. It is one maze of tumble-down shanties, reeking with all sorts of slimy and unhealthy nastiness. A visitor recently encountered a pig and fourteen goats while walking along the block. Piles of rank rubbish were stacked up at the sides of the ill-looking dens and behind them. Geese and ducks paddled in stagnant pools, broken or ignorantly constructed chimneys poured clouds of smoke into the streets, and the delicate complex perfumes of horse and cow stables added to the general vileness. In one yard the visitor found two blear-eyed men burning a heap of rotten vegetables and other rubbish. A rut in the oozing soil was used in place of a sewer, and in it lay old pieces of bread, the putrid internal arrangements of some fowl and a gummy, varnish like mass of some decaying substance. There was a stable at the rear of the yard, but it had evidently not been cleaned for a very long time.

Opposite these collections of offensive and fever breeding holes was a row of handsome brown stone houses in process of construction. The owner stood in the street. "The Board of Health has been notified time and time again about this horrible neighborhood," he said, "but the officials do not seem to care. None of these shanties have sewers, and how the worst of the filth is carried off I don't know. Holes can not be dug to hide it, for there is solid rock one or two feet from the surface. If cholera crosses the ocean this year the Board of Health will have a new guilt upon its head, for this place is a perfect disease incubator. All this ground is owned by men of means, who allow these pests to afflict the neighborhood for the sake of an annual rental of about $10 or $50 from each tenant." Dogs, cats, goats and poultry walked and waddled in and out of the yards by the score. The greasy, scummy sewage of the community ran down piles of ashes and garbage into the street. It trickled and dripped from crannies in the racks and poured from beneath stables. It lay in pools and soaked into the stinking soil, where the hot sun's rays coated it with the bubbling green danger signal that tells of deadly fevers and far graveyards. High above the humid, shiny ground rose heaps of tangled, rusty iron, mounds of dirty rags, sinks with a horrifying mystery of uncleanliness and noisome homes, in which little children, white faced and curly headed, inhaled death and sickness every hour. There was one squalid cabin built upon the top of a rocky cliff, and upon the rickety wooden steps sprawling down the rough bowlders stood a number of little girls. The children who are the outcome from these hotbeds are but social barbarians. They have no conception of what "home," in its true sense means. Beauty and love are almost taken out of their lives. They hear no music; they see no flowers, unless they catch the strain of the street musicians or the visions of the bouquet-baskets when they wander into Broadway.

WHERE THE CRIMINALS COME FROM.

All existence to them is a struggle of squalor with sin, of passion and ignorance with hard materialism and the established order of things. Almost as soon as they can walk they are thrust into the street to beg or steal, or contribute in some manner to their parents' miserable support, though it frequently happens that they never know their parents, and are outcasts from their earliest consciousness.

Abused and beaten by those who should be their natural protectors, they soon abandon their "homes" and seek their own fortune. Strictly speaking, they have neither childhood nor boyhood. They pass from neglected infancy, almost by a bound, to an mature and unnatural manhood, compelled by a sense of self-protection to a rugged and semi-savage independence. Long before their teens they are fighting against want and fate, like shaggy veterans, grapplings with circumstances that would appal men who might be their fathers.

Their number can hardly be ascertained. It is steadily on the increase, and might today be counted by tens of hundreds. The gamin is to be seen anywhere and everywhere, in any part of the island, at any hour of the day or night. There is no mistaking him.

Perhaps you think this an exaggeration. Unfortunately it is far this side of what I have seen and you can see.

Comfort Through a Window.

(CHILD WITHIN TO TRAMP WITHOUT.)

It's not so nice here as it looks,
Wish china that keeps breakin so,
And five of Mr. Tennyson's books
Too fine to look in—is it, though?

If you just had to sit here (Well!)
In satin chairs too blue to touch,
And look at flowers too sweet to smell,
In vases—would you like it much?

If you see any flowers, they grow,
And you can find them in the sun,
These are the ones we buy, you know,
In Winter time—when there are none!

Then you can sit on rocks, you see,
And walk about in winter, too—
Because you have no shoes! Dear me!
How many things they let you do!

Then you can sleep out in the shade
All day, I guess, and all night too,
Because—you know, you're not afraid
Of other fellows just like you!

You have no home like this, you know
(Where mamma's cross, and ladies call)—
You have the world to live in, though,
And that's the prettiest place of all.

—Doublin Irish Times.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE AND INCIDENT.

Fortune lost, nothing lost; courage lost, much lost; honor lost, more lost; soul lost, all lost.

We never graduate in religion: because the nearer we are to God, the more we see there is to be learned.—M. H. Seelye.

The New Jersey Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church reports for the past year a gain among its churches of 1,030 parishioners and 609 members.

Twenty-one missionaries have been sent abroad by the Baptists of the South since last May. It has been estimated that it will take $16,000 each month to meet the demands of the foreign field.

The first Presbyterian church of Woodbridge, N. J., is one of the most venerable in the country. It is now two hundred and ten years old. Its Sunday-school will celebrate its sixty-eighth anniversary on the third Sunday of June next.

We have seen the statement that M. Brisson, the new French Premier, is an Evangelical Protestant of marked purity of private and public life, of unflinching integrity and rectitude, opposed to making the church an instrument in the hands of State.

Mr. Bower, a Scotch preacher, had a beadle who was a remarkable character, as many of the old beadles were. On one occasion he said to the minister in reference to the grave-digging, which was also part of his function: "Trade's verra dull the noo; I have na buried a leevin' cratur for three weeks."

The American Baptist Missionary Union, under date of April 25, 1885, makes the following financial statement: Appropriations for the year (including debt April 1, 1884, of $21,369.67) $412,642.26. Receipts—donations, $229,413.23; legacies, $29,802.41; woman's societies, $72,670.67; other sources, $31,131.19. Total, $362,026.20: deficit, $50,615.177.

A certain kirk-beadle was remonstrated with for making an overcharge for digging a grave. "Weel, ye see," said the beadle, making a motion with his thumb to the grave, "him and me had a bit trock wi' a bit watch about a dizen years syne, an' he's never paid me the difference yet. So, says I to myself, this is my last chance noo, I'll better tak' it."

A prominent member of a church not a thousand miles from this city was talking with his pastor the other day about an excellent but somewhat aggressive lady of the parish. After descanting at length on her virtues he concluded by saying: "In fact she may be called the salt of the earth." "Yes," responded the clergyman quickly, "and the pepper too."—N. Y. Tribune.

The good people of Cincinnati are making hospitable arrangements for the entertainment of the Presbyterian General Assembly, which meets there on the 21st day of this month. The place is so central, and the means of getting to it so many and convenient that it will in all probability be the largest General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church ever convened in this country.

He Was Waiting.

[Merchant Traveler.]

A good old Kentucky Democrat, who has been waiting twenty-five years for a post-office, owns a fine dog, which is his constant companion. The other day the dog had been having a run in the sunshine and was resting on the porch with his tounge hanging out.

"That's a boss dog," said a traveling man, who had been selling the old man a bill of goods.

"Your'e right, he is," said the old man proudly.

"What makes him stick his tongue out that way?"

"Politics,"

"Politics? How?"

"Why, sir, that dog knows Cleveland is elected, and he knows I want a postoffice, and he's got his tongue out ready to begin licking stamps.

BOOK CANVASSERS.

The Methods of the Male and Female of the Genus.

[New York Graphic.]

In no other part of the world is canvassing carried on so large a scale as in the United States, particularly in the city of New York. Advertisements can be read in almost every daily issue of our metropolitan journals offering employment to those who will undertake this mode of gaining a living. Yet it is an occupation that not one man in a hundred will succeed in. It attracts that very large class who have by some means or other failed in what is generally termed "the genteel profession," and so clerks, lawyers, authors, actors, artists and many clergymen take to it. Canvassing appears at first a very easy way of realizing an income. Yet it is one of the most difficult; for a man to be a good "canvasser" must in reality have a thorough knowledge of the world and be a keen judge of every-day life. No matter what position in life a man may be in—brown-stone-mansion man or tenement house man—he will not generally deny, from mere vanity's sake, but what he's a reader, although probably some have no little difficulty in recognizing one author from another. In canvassing a book the canvasser must be able to freely speak of the author and his works, the illustrations, the binding and the publishers.

"You see," said an old canvasser a few days since to a reporter, "when you canvass a book you have to carry it with you. Consequently when you approach the man or house the book canvasser is at once recognized, and you get a refusal in some shape or other before you can hardly utter a word. Now, sir, you would be surprised at the success of women as canvassers—they far outshine the men. The fact of their being one of the gentler sex is largely in their favor. The sight of a neatly-dressed and perhaps good-looking woman tramping around in search of a livelihood touches the tender impulses of the heart. The lady canvasser gains the entree where the gentleman canvasser would fear to tread. As a rule the former merely carries a prospectus or a sample sheet of the book with her. This, of course, can be concealed or rolled up like a document. She calls on bankers, merchants and people of leisure. The notice of 'no peddlers allowed in the building' she disregards. The janitor, the elevator boys, the office clerk or the domestic servants can not, of course, tell her errand, and she is politely ushered into the presence of the party she seeks without any difficulty whatever, while the majority of men would have been unceremoniously denied admittance across the outer threshold. Once in the presence of the 'boss' the lady Cowper dilates upon the merits of her book with little fear of rebuff, for most men have a spirit of gallantry in them; so they listen patiently—whatever they may think—and possibly order the book. Female canvassers are a pretty well-educated class. They have been school or music teachers, or they are poor gentlemen's daughters. In dress they are neat, not gaudy, and have a reserved, modest style of manner, which always commands attention. If she is middle aged she is perhaps a widow lady who lived in Southern affluence before the war, or a forsaken wife, or an ex-opera singer; and should she find the listener in the melting mood, she will drop a few remarks about financial and domestic troubles. Hundreds of Wall street men have met these ladies and hundreds have ordered books from them they never cared for, or expected to see, purely from feelings of respect, admiration or sympathy.

"Sewing machines were another difficult thing to handle. I refer," went on the old canvasser, "to the time they were not so common as now, when a man had to be well posted about their working gear and the different improvements being constantly made. I remember one who was known among the canvassing fraternity as 'the Bump Man.' He was very successful with his machines, which he attributed to his knowledge of phrenology, and this will show you the many devices men resort to in canvassing. For instance, if this 'Bump Man' should call up on a woman to solicit her order for a sewing machine he would, while making a sale, at intervals break off in the conversation and look admiringly at the children. Then he would say, 'Excuse me, madame, but I have made phrenology a study in my days of prosperity and that child has a very fine head. It will gain some lofty position in the world.' Then would he, while the mother's eyes lit up with pride, examine the juvenile's cranium and foretell for it great success in some high-sounding profession. 'Praise the child and capture the mother for a customer,' was his saying, and many orders he got in this manner."

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She sat alone on the gray, cold stone,
And this was the burden of her moan:
"My uncle is cook on board of a sloop,
My cousin has joined a theatrical troupe,
My sister caught cold with her beau on the stoop,
And the little one died of malignant croup:
My lover dear
Lies under here,
And I sit alone and think and think,
For I can't go alone to the skating rink.

—The Judge.

Bottom [illegible] ces.

[Brooklyn Union.]

Old Mr. Bennington (in art gallery)—Who did you say painted it?

Dealer—Rubens.

"What is it worth?"

"Five hundred dollars."

"Five hundred what?"

"Dollars."

"For one of 'em?"

"Yes."

"What's the man's name, what painted it, did you say?"

"Rubens."

"Well, give me his address, an' I'll bet you the price of a first-class frame that I kin git him to paint me one jes' like it for half the money."

The deaths from diphtheria per 100 000 inhabitants stands as follows in the cities named: Amsterdam, 265; Berlin, 245; Madrid, 225; Dresden, 184; Warsaw, 167; Philadelphia, 163; Chicago, 146; Turin, 127; St. Petersburg, 121 Bucharest, 118; Berne, 115; Munich, 111; Stockholm, 107; Antwerp, 104; New York, 91; Paris, 85; Hamburg, 76; Naples, 74; Lisbon, 74; Stuttgart, 61; Rome, 56; Edinburgh, 50; Buda-Pesth, 50; The Hague, 45; Vienna, 44; London, 44; Christiana, 43; Copenhagen, 42; City of Brussels, 35.

War.

[Merchant Traveler.]

Jones and Jackson were going home the other evening and the newsboys were yelling about the Russia-England war, and all that sort of stuff.

"Do you think there's going to be a war?" asked Jones.

"Ugh? What?" answered Jackson, rousing as if from a reverie.

"Do you think there's going to be a war?"

"Yes," he replied in a thoughtful voice.

"Why do you think so?"

"Because my wife told me this morning that there wasn't a lump of coal in the cellar and I must order some, and I forgot all about it."

Exegesis.

[Graphic.]

The minister was juggling to put on a new four-ply collar, and the perspiration was starting from every pore.

"Bless the collar!" he ejaculated. "Oh, yes, bless it. Bless the blessed collar!"

"My dear," said his wife, "what is your text for this morning's sermon?"

"F-fourteenth verse f-fifty-fifth Psalm," he replied in short gasps. "The w-words of his m-mouth were s smoother than b-butter, but w-war was in his heart."

On a recent Saturday night a count was made in 200 London saloons, and it was found that between the hours of 9 and 12 they were visited by 48 805 men and 30,784 women and 7,019 children, or, in all, by 86,608 persons. It was also found that in one of the best quarters of the city 1,250 well-dressed women entered at twelve saloons between the hours of 10 and 12 o'clock, 1,122 of whom took malt and the balance spiritous liquors, which they drank in every case over the bar. In none of the saloons were there screens before the doors or windows, as in American drinking places.

London telephone subscribers pay a rental of $100 per annum for each phone, 10 per cent of which goes to the Government. The company has 5,000 miles of overhead wire in the city, put up at a cost of $250 per mile. Connections have been made with all the cities in the North of England, the operation of which has had no adverse effect on the postal revenues. Discussing the subject of underground lines the counsel for the company says it would cost $10,000,000 to make the change.

And now we have the most remarkable case of cure yet reported by faith healers. A young woman in Stockholm having lost an eye was wearing one of glass, but the healer took it out and in three days afterwards a new eye was visible! Why it took three days to come, is not stated, nor how long it took to become seeing as well as seen. We believe that no instance in this country is yet mentioned of a limb, or any other member being restored after having once been severed from the body.